

Healing Habits

FROM A
FUNCTIONAL
MEDICINE
PHYSICIAN

by
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Rob Downey witnessed his first exceptional clinical outcome in response to functional medicine in 2006 when his natural medicine mentor turned around a severe autoimmunity case via whole food, probiotics and safe, potent anti-inflammatory botanical supplements. When he asked her whether getting Institute for Functional Medicine (IFM) training would allow him to “speak the language” so he could understand what she was doing she responded, “If you get the IFM training, you will help people the way I do.” He never looked back.



*CLICK TO WATCH ALONG
WHILE YOU READ*

**THIS IS
YOUR
ADVENTURE**



PEACE



**THE BODY
KNOWS
THE WAY**



**PUSH
THE
DOSE**



**MAKE
IT
YOURS**





INTRO /

THIS IS YOUR ADVENTURE

Here's a way to know if you are on your healing path- ask yourself if any adventures are ensuing.

Everyone I know that's healing, or maintaining their hard-won health, has many adventure stories, ongoing. The first time I did an elimination diet, I didn't try the recipes in advance, nor stock my pantry, nor touch base with my household members- that first night was empty, cramped stomachs, scowls around the table...super memorable!

Now, I love and frequently make many recipes from that time. I will never forget the evil green smoothie with more kale and avocado than I personally have an affinity for: khaki-colored and the consistency of repair putty, unleavened with any of the right stuff to make it yummy, smooth, or joyful.

I make many smoothie recipes I now like, frequently. I hurt my shoulder so badly teaching myself to swim a mile it took me over a year to recover. Now I know how to do yoga daily with a shoulder that's never been the same since I threw the ball from left field (yes, left field) to (toward?) home plate, playing pee-wee baseball. You get the idea.



Joseph Campbell's "The Hero's Journey" provides a great demonstration of this.

Our healing habits are invariably part of this transition into a dimension with powerful, mysterious, transformative forces. Twists and turns are the expected- why?...because it's a great story! After we respond to the "call to adventure" we are out there, away from the safe village of whatever habits and beliefs were predictable, even comfortable, but not enough.

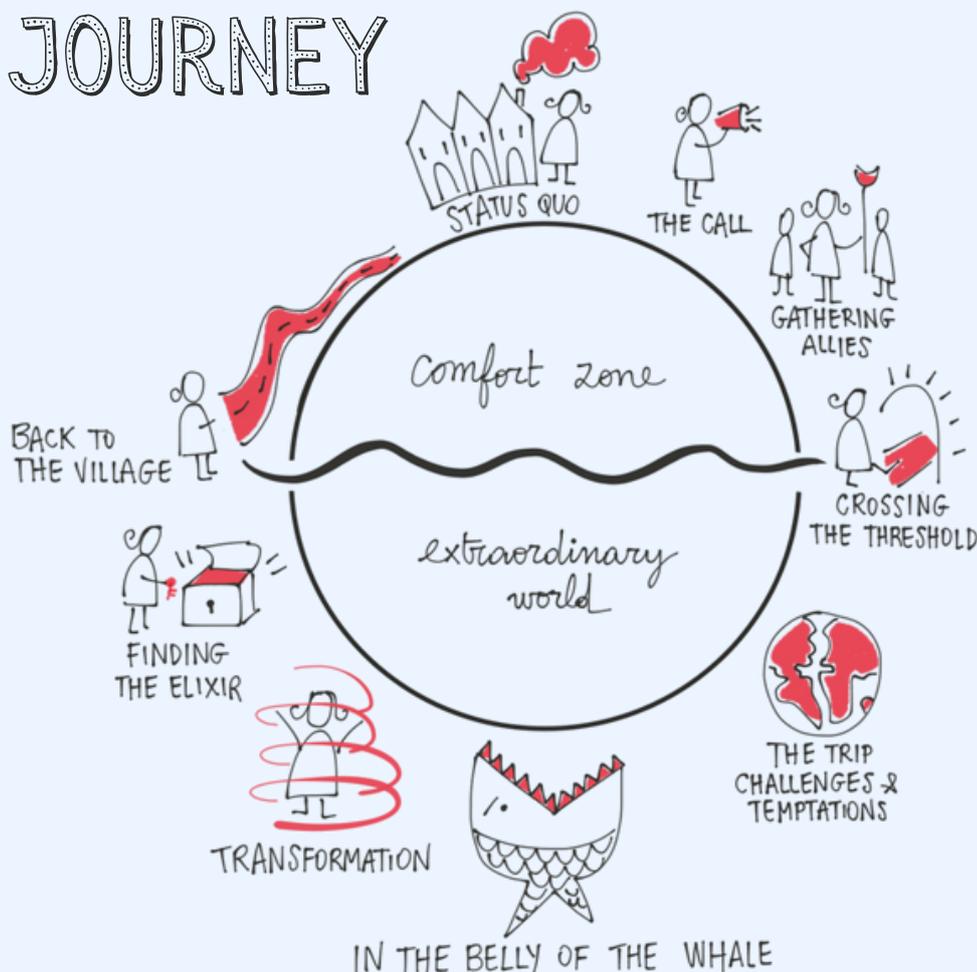
As you find yourself sleeping under a tree, in the rain, after slaying a few monsters, give yourself a pat on the back.

Remember: nothing is bad or good, it's all just an invitation to grow.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

The hero's journey, simply put, is a character's evolution. It is their process of embarking on an adventure, facing a challenge, and overcoming it to become a better person—usually improving the greater good along the way too.

Now, picture yourself as the hero. Who are your allies? Have you been in "the belly of the whale", and most importantly- what is your elixir?





*turn off digital
drink silence, the nectar that
floats your hummingbird*

DR. ROB DOWNEY



01

PEACE



One deep breath turns on a state of peace. There is nothing you do that will be more important than finding, maintaining, and growing this peaceful place.

In finding and creating peace, there is no “bad” or “good”- we are witnessing our thoughts, experiences, and reactions in a state of “radical acceptance of what is” (Marsha Linehan, psychologist, 1993).

Things don’t get better when we discard, or ignore, the parts of ourselves that we don’t like. They get better when we mindfully witness our whole self, which is in itself an action- a powerfully transformative action.

Finding and creating peace is different for everyone. Mindfulness/meditation is the most well-codified way to get there, and the “monkey mind” many say is the reason we can’t meditate, is simply one more thing we learn to witness, as its manifestations arise and dissipate...so anyone can learn meditation/mindfulness.

Find the source(s) of peace that make sense, and matter, to you: getting in the zone with your art, or projects/spending time with people you love/quiet time in nature/taking a break from your responsibilities/having fun/practicing gratitude. If in doubt, see what your heart says about what you need for peace, and having more peace.



Create a clear-eyed place of peace within yourself.

MY PEACE CHECKLIST



Find a place of peace in your home



Celebrate successes, no matter how small



Be someone else's motivator



Create peace within yourself

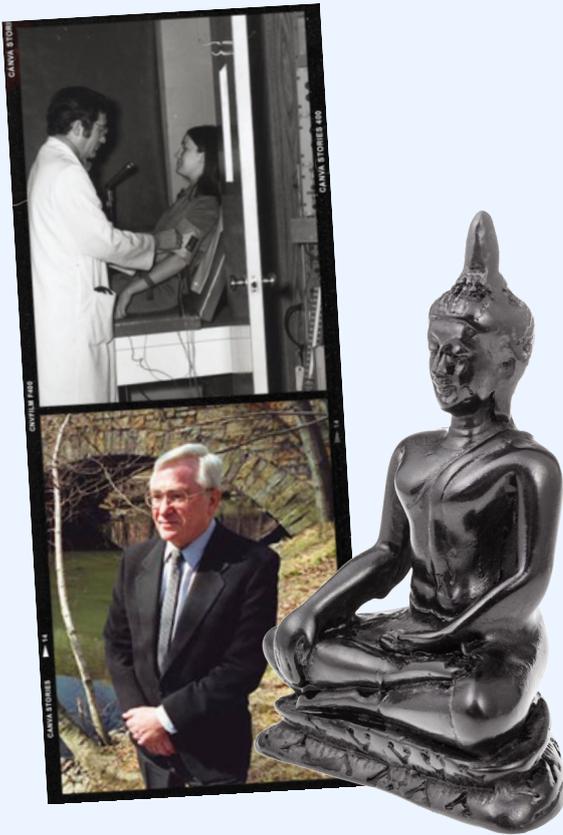


THE BODY KNOWS THE WAY



The phrase the body knows the way is a reminder to all of us that we don't need to figure things out intellectually, and do everything for our body, we need to trust that it can and does know what to do. This takes a lot of stress off, and gets rid of the common mental pitfall- thinking we're broken, and we have to do it all.

DATA SOURCES



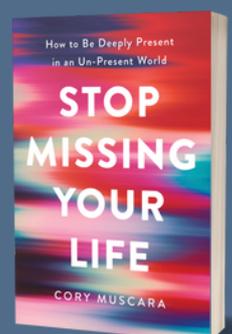
Dr. Benson started studying Tibetan monks in the 1960s, interested in what he termed the relaxation response (elicited by meditation, yoga and repetitive prayer) - the beneficial response which is the opposite of the negative effects of the stress response. His landmark scientific publication was about the healthy genetic expression of lifelong meditators compared to novices, with additional groups measured as they learned the relaxation response. The lifelong meditators had better function in their mitochondria, or the "powerhouse of the cells", less silent inflammation, less stress & breakdown markers, and more longevity or resilience markers. The "learner group" made it halfway to the benefits of the lifelong meditators in three months!

MEDITATION

*Herb Benson MD,
Harvard University*

Your Turn- become "present"

In this book, one of my favorite mindfulness experts, Cory Muscara, exposes how the phrase "be present" has become a platitude, and reveals how to achieve true *Presence*: a quality of being that is unmistakably attractive about a person, and one that comes when we've peeled back the layers of guarding that prevent us from being our full, honest, and integrated selves.



DATA SOURCES

DEMENTIA- OR REPAIRING THE "HOLES IN THE ROOF"



Dale Bredeesen

Dale Bredeesen MD, a researcher and clinician, has demonstrated that there are 36 key factors that lead to getting, or not getting, dementia. He calls them 36 "holes in the roof".

The body knows how to keep the brain "plastic," meaning resilient, bright and happy over the years, and despite age and stress. The body can do this when few enough of the 36 factors are working against us, and enough are working for us, that the body decides, as an executive decision, it's OK to keep "growing the business of the brain." We don't have to fix all the factors working against us, nor fix all the things we want going for us, just enough of them our bodies can do the rest. The same applies to all of the many plastic physiologic pathways in the body.



DATA SOURCES

STRESS REDUCTION

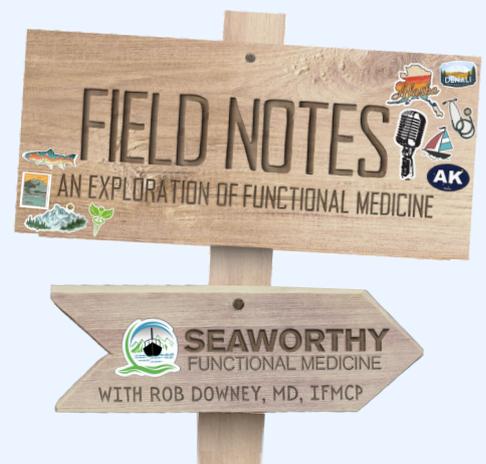
Heidi Hanna, PhD



Heidi Hanna, a PhD researcher with decades of expertise about how stress affects us, says the number one reported thing that brings people down is the “hustle and the grind.” Our bodies know how to cope- we need to get in a place of safety, “from the ground up,” (practices that create the experience of safety in the body), and we can heal.

Dr. Hanna emphasizes that resilience is bouncing back to where we started from, after stressors, like a supple branch. She encourages us to take the next step, and learn that we can use healing from the ground up to have stress make us even better than we were before.

CLICK BELOW TO LISTEN TO
MY PODCAST INTERVIEW
WITH HEIDI HANNA ON
MASTERING STRESS FOR
POSITIVE CHANGE



55:37

03

PUSH THE DOSE

You may already incorporate healing practices , but you may need to 'push the dose' by increasing the frequency of your practice , and to add other, new wellness "protocols" to your tool box. Here is an example of pushing the dose with the mind-body connection, each rung being more attainable than the next.

Attend a [Plum Village retreat](#)- a mindfulness center that offers both virtual and live events throughout the world

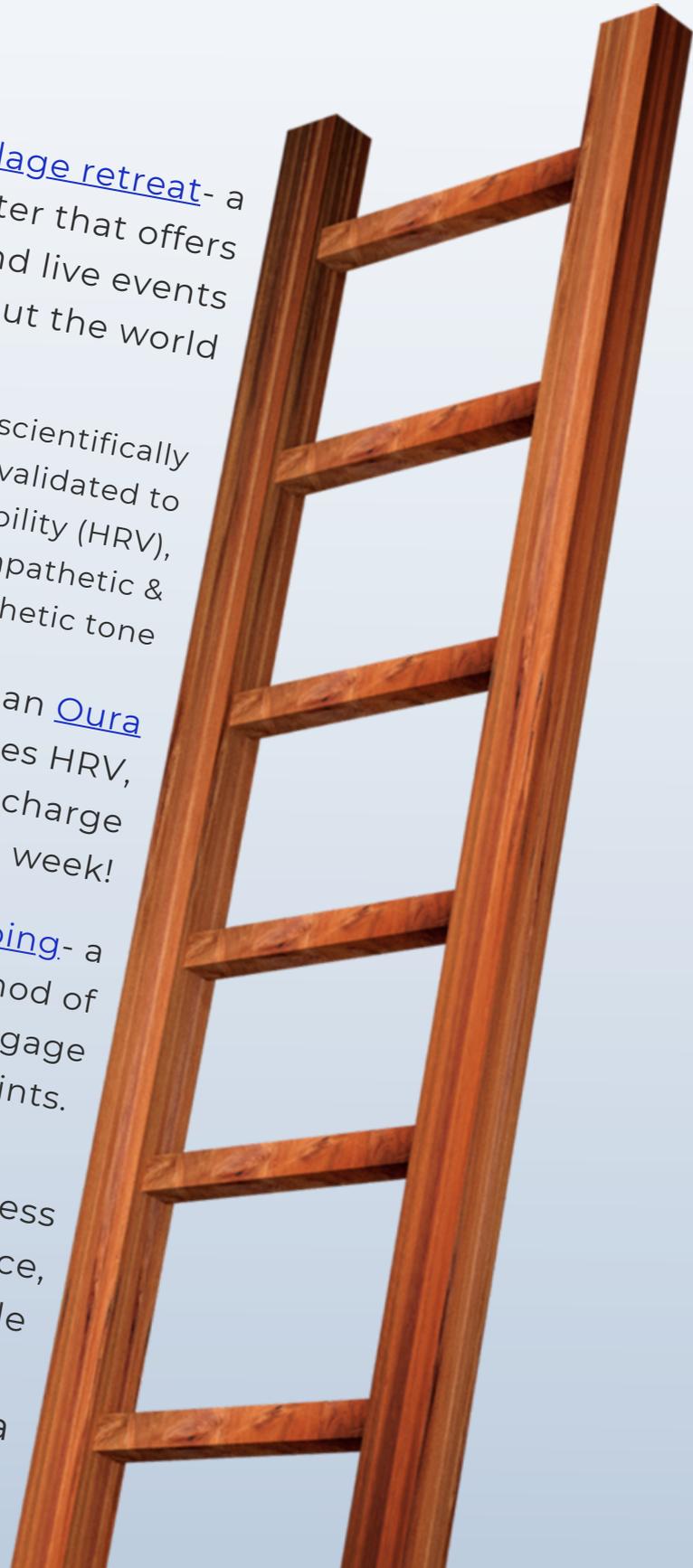
Add [HeartMath](#), a scientifically driven practice that's validated to optimize heart rate variability (HRV), and balance sympathetic & parasympathetic tone

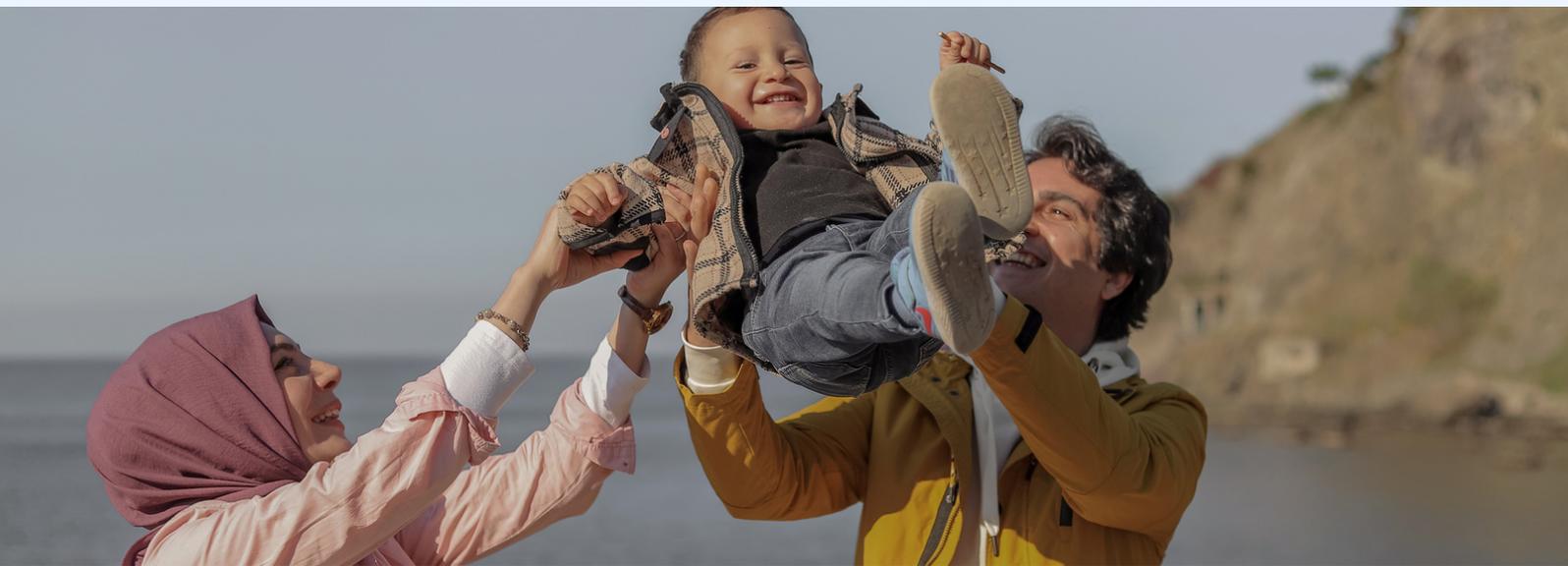
Consider purchasing an [Oura Ring](#), which, measures HRV, and sleep, One hour charge lasts nearly a week!

Explore [tapping](#)- a scientifically proven method of clearing emotional baggage via acupressure points.

Download a mindfulness app like Headspace, Insight Timer, or Abide

Spend 20 minutes a day doing yoga





04 / MAKE IT YOURS

Here's the beauty- as you get there, stay there, whatever there is, to you....it will be your way.

It's best to know up front that this is going to be yours! This is what all my patients and students learn, and I never tire of watching it happen.

Your food plan might be *like* Mark Hyman's, but it won't be Mark Hyman's. You will love what you love, avoid what you find unappealing, obtain what's available, and work within the boundaries of the possible in your life circumstances.

Why does knowing this matter? We are influenced by thought leaders, many of whom we appropriately revere. We can unknowingly assume we aren't "there," until we are like them. I suggest this take on it instead- enjoy knowing that what you figure out is going to be like your favorite jacket, your comfiest shoes, your most trusted friends.

*Provide enough resources, remove enough hurdles,
and great things happen.*

Your food, your movement, your sleep, your people, your restorative practices, will unfold in alignment with your discernment. Think of that word, discernment- no one else has the capacity that you do to attend to the feeling of trying the different things you learn over time and knowing, in your heart of hearts, what's right for you.

For me, it's making those veggies savory with healthy fat, having plenty of time to sleep, keeping my focus on service, getting some of my needed movement by riding my bike to work all four seasons in Alaska (we actually have only two seasons- 4th of July, and winter). You get the idea.





IF YOUR WAY LOOKS A LITTLE,
OR A LOT, DIFFERENT THAN
EVERYONE ELSE'S:

THAT'S GOOD, IT SHOULD!

